Business Ally of Ex-C.I.A. Agent Held in Texas on Currency Charge

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FORT WORTH, Dec. 22 — Roberta J. Barnes, identified by Federal prosecutors as a close associate of Edwin P. Wilson, a former intelligence agent, was charged today in Federal court here with a violation of Federal currency laws.

A sealed warrant was also filed in Washington today indicating that she was wanted as a material witness in a grand jury investigation of Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson, a former agent for the Central Intelligence Agency, has already been indicted for shipping explosives to Libya as part of a program to train terrorists. The grand jury in Washington is continuing to hear evidence involving Mr. Wilson and others, according to Federal prosecutors.

Miss Barnes, 33 years old, was arrested last night at the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport after declaring she had less than $5,000 in United States currency. Federal officials said Miss Barnes had approximately $5,050 upon arrival last night on a flight from London.

A Federal magistrate set bail of $20,000 for the currency charge, while a separate bail of $500,000 was set on the material witness warrant.

According to E. Lawrence Barcella Jr., the Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Columbia who is handling the Wilson investigation, and former associates of Mr. Wilson, Miss Barnes has been an officer in a number of corporations operated by Mr. Wilson and has helped manage the London office used by Mr. Wilson to recruit pilots and obtain supplies for the Government of Libya.

Mr. Barcella declined to discuss the circumstances surrounding Miss Barnes's arrest last night. Her attorney, Michael R. Thomas, said Miss Barnes was on her way to visit relatives in Texas.

John Sweeney, an Assistant United States Attorney in Texas, pointed out in requesting a high bail for Miss Barnes that she had no residence in this country and had lived abroad for several years.